



Video 7:

Making Your Poem Shine

Just like a builder building a house, poets have a toolkit they can use to make a poem shine. In this video, we're going to go through a few of the tools you can use. Most of them should be things you've come across before – you can use them in descriptive paragraphs as well as in poems. This video is just about *remembering* to use them, and about using them as well as you possibly can.

Remember: you don't have to only use these things once – you can keep using them in your poem as many times as you like.

Similes:

A simile is a way of comparing something to something else. For example, you might say that a fell is 'as big as a castle' or 'as wide as an elephant'. Or you might say that the wind roars 'like an angry teacher' or 'like an aeroplane coming in to land'.

You can usually spot a simile, because it uses the words 'like' or 'as'.

Try making your similes interesting or surprising. For example, 'as cold as ice' isn't very interesting, because it's one of the first things someone thinks of when you say 'cold'. It doesn't surprise us. But 'as cold as a dog's nose' is surprising. It's true (a dog's nose *is* cold), but it isn't the first think we'd think of. The same with 'as cold as a mountain stream'.

Extra challenge: Try including a simile where you compare something to an animal, and one where you compare something to a building.

Expanded similes:

If you want to make your similes even more interesting, then try expanding them (making them bigger) by adding extra description.

E.g. 'The fell is as wide as an elephant' might become: 'The fell is as wide as an elephant's back, grey and knobbly, spread out in the sun.'



Try including things like colour and texture – remember your 5 senses! When you use a simile, you're helping to paint a picture in the reader's mind. Expanding your simile is like adding extra detail to the picture.

You don't need to do this for every simile, but doing it once or twice can make your poem much more interesting, and help the reader to see the images you're trying to paint.

Metaphors:

The difference between a simile and a metaphor is fairly straightforward: a simile uses 'like' or 'as', and a metaphor doesn't. Instead of saying something is *like* something else, you're saying it *is* something else.

'The fell is like an elephant's back' might become: 'The fell is an elephant's back'.

We know you're not being literal, because we can tell from the context that the fell isn't *actually* an elephant, but metaphors can help paint the picture more vividly, and mean that you're not constantly repeating the word 'like'.

Hint: One way to come up with metaphors is to come up with a simile first (as similes tend to be a bit easier), then just take out the 'like', or the 'as big as' or 'as cold as' bits, to turn it into a metaphor. This doesn't always work, so you'll have to read through your metaphor carefully afterwards, to make sure it's obvious you're not being literal, but it's a good way to start.

Alliteration:

Alliteration is using words that start with the same sound or letter. You don't want to over-do this, or it can lead to your poem sounding like a tongue-twister. But using it every now and again can give your poem a musical ring to it. (In other words, it can make the poem sound good when it's read aloud – but more on that in Workshop 4.)

Remember, you can't just pick any old word that starts with the right letter – you still need to choose the best word that fits your description.

Personification:

Lastly, personification is a way of describing something that isn't alive as though it were a person.



Often, this means giving it a feeling or an emotion, but it can also mean giving something an action that it can't actually perform. We do this all the time with the weather:

'It's miserable out there.' The sky can't actually feel miserable, but because it's grey and raining, it looks like it's crying.

'The sky looks angry.' We know it's probably cloudy and gearing up for a storm.

'The wind was yelling at the top of its voice.' The wind doesn't actually have a mouth or a voice box, but we know from this description that it's loud.

Of course, we can give emotions or actions to things other than the weather. Try doing this for other things in your poem, too, and see where it gets you.

Hint: It's often (though not always) better to give something an action than to say how it's feeling. For example, 'The clouds glowered' is more powerful than 'The clouds were angry'.

Challenge: Try to use your other tools from your toolbox here as well. So you might say: 'The clouds glowered like a toddler in a tantrum.' This uses 3 tools in one go: personification, simile, and alliteration.

Extra Challenge: Choose something in your landscape (or the whole landscape itself, if you like) and make it *want* something.

(If you want, you can watch **Video 4: Offcomer** again, and try to spot some of these techniques in my own poem.)